

# The great, great grandmother of the kingdom of God

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, let's take our Bible, shall we, and turn to the Book of Ruth. If you have a church Bible, it's page 222, treble two.

If not, then it's near the beginning of the Old Testament after the Book of Judges. A little book with just a few chapters. We're going to read together chapter one. And I'll start right at the beginning. In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. And a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.

The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi. The names of his two sons were Malon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah.

They went into the country of Moab and they remained there. But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died and she was left with her two sons.

[ 1 : 15 ] These took Moabite wives. The name of one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years and both Malon and Chilion died.

So that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab.

For she had heard in the fields of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them food. So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law and they went on their way to return to the land of Judah.

But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them and they lifted up their voices and wept.

[ 2 : 19 ] And they said to her, No, we will return with you to your people. But Naomi said, Turn back, my daughters. Why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands?

Turn back, my daughters. Go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, would you therefore wait till they were grown?

Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters. It is exceedingly bitter for me, for your sake, that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me.

And they lifted up their voices and wept again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. She said, See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods.

Return after your sister-in-law. But Ruth said, Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go, I will go. Where you lodge, I will lodge.

[ 3 : 24 ] Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I'll die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also, if anything but death parts me from you.

When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said, No more. So, the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem.

When they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the woman said, Is this Naomi? She said to them, Do not call me Naomi.

Call me Mara. For the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty.

Why call me Naomi when the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me? So, Naomi returned, and Ruth, the Moabite, her daughter-in-law with her, returned from

the country of Moab, and they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

[ 4 : 41 ] Amen, and may God bless his word to us. Amen. Amen. Our theme this evening is the great-great-grandmother of the kingdom of God, and we're looking at the book of Ruth in a kind of overview, and so we'll be referring to the whole book and try to carry you along on the thread of the narrative.

Now, let me just make one comment before we begin so I don't get in and get caught here. I'm used to when they come upon the name, the covenant name of God in the Old Testament text, and in most of our English Bibles, as you know, that's when the Lord with Lord is written in all capital letters.

I'm used to using Yahweh for that. That's as close as we can get, I think, to the pronunciation, but it's a personal name of God. And when you have the Lord, and the Lord's in all capital letters in your English translation, that means that's where that personal covenant name of God is used.

I'm used to using that, so I don't have to catch myself all the time. Let me just go ahead, and if you want to retranslate it back to the Lord, that's okay. But you do the work and let me go on if you don't mind.

Thank you. Now, some years ago, when Lyndon Bain Johnson was the vice president in my country under the John F. Kennedy administration, and on one occasion, LBJ, as he was called, came out of his office in the Senate and grabbed hold of a journalist.

[ 6 : 30 ] His name was Russell Baker. Grabbed hold of a journalist, and he said, you! I've been looking for you! And he pulls him into his office and sits him down, and he starts talking to him and telling him about what a great insider he is and how important he is to the program and the plan of the Kennedy administration, et cetera.

Now, while LBJ was going on in this monologue, he tended to do monologues, he was scratching something on a sheet of paper, and he punched a button on his desk, and the secretary came in. He gave her the slip of paper. She walked out. LBJ kept talking to this guy, and after a little bit, the woman would come back. The secretary comes back in, puts the paper down in front of LBJ. He reads it and then crumples it up and throws it away and keeps talking. Well, finally, he let him go. Russell Baker found out what was written on that slip of paper eventually.

LBJ had written on it, who is this I'm talking to? Now, sometimes you can have that kind of a problem. You can have someone that's really big on the plan and the scheme, you know, the Kennedy administration and its legislative program, et cetera, but it doesn't really pay attention to individuals.

[ 7 : 47 ] But in the Bible, you can have both views side by side. You can have what we might call the kingdom view as you look at Old Testament narratives. You have the kingdom view, and you can have the individual view.

Sometimes we see them intermixed, of course. But the kingdom view is God's program. By the way, I spell program with two M's and an E, just in case you're wondering.

But God's program, where he's going to take the seed of Abraham, for instance, and he's going to raise up a people for himself. And out of that people, he's going to bring out of the covenant King David and out of David's line, one who's greater than David, one who eventually will redeem us from our sins then and will eventually conquer all his and our enemies.

That's the big view. That's the kingdom view. And then sometimes the emphasis and the focus seems to be on the individual view, on maybe one or several of God's servants that he happens to be caring for in the midst of their pilgrimage of faith.

Sometimes those two views are together. Sometimes you see them one more than the other, but both can be proper. Just keep that in mind as we waddle through the book of Ruth.

[ 9 : 05 ] Now, what's the main point of Ruth? I would put it this way. God takes the common and complicated circumstances in the lives of his people and makes them contribute to the coming of his kingdom in this world.

I'll run that through again. No, it's necessarily profound, but some of you may want it. God takes the common and complicated circumstances in the lives of his people and makes them contribute to the coming of his kingdom in this world.

Now, if you want a simplified structure for the whole book of Ruth, this isn't sophisticated, so don't get your hopes up. But you can basically mark it off in three globs of material.

If we go up here, I'm going to declare this the northwest corner here. You have a little section called chapter 1, verses 1 to 5.

That's a sad disaster. A sad disaster. Then you come down here in the middle and you have a huge square, which takes up most of the text.

[10:12] You can call that a beautiful providence. Chapter 1, verse 6 through chapter 4, verse 17. A beautiful providence. And then you get down here to the southeastern corner and you have another little box, chapter 4, verses 18 to 22.

And that's a bigger picture. A bigger picture. That gives you a little bit of a, doesn't fill in all the blanks, but kind of the scheme. Now, as we look at the book of Ruth, the climax obviously comes in chapter 4, verses 18 to 22, even though it doesn't look very interesting.

And it seems to indicate, since Naomi is the great-great-grandmother of King David, that in one sense you can say Naomi is the great-great-grandmother of the kingdom of God.

Now, one thing that you, about the book of Ruth, is that it seems to be told from Naomi's perspective.

Now, that's kind of the way we're going to look at it tonight. Not that she's necessarily the center of interest. In a way, Ruth is the center of interest. But Naomi, it's kind of told from Naomi's perspective and viewpoint.

[11:30] And that's kind of the way we'll approach it this evening. Just remember, as we do so, to let the scary import of chapter 1, verses 1 to 5 sink in, though.

You can do the math as you look at the first five verses of the book. One famine, two marriages, three deaths, ten years, five verses.

The scary part of that is that it tells you that it only takes five verses for your whole life to fall apart. And it did for Naomi. So, let's look at the text then. The first thing I want you to notice in our survey is that there's a perseverance you may miss.

Chapter 1, verses 6 to 22. A perseverance you may miss. Now, notice that Naomi's an interesting combination.

[12:36] There's certainly bitterness here, I suppose you could say. If you look down in verse 13 and then at 20 and 21, we're in chapter 1. Verse 13, she says, Would you refrain if I could have children tonight until they grew up so you could marry them?

No, my daughters, she says. And then she says, For it is far more bitter for me than for you. Indeed, the hand of Yahweh has gone forth against me.

I don't know whether you want to read too much bitterness in that, but she certainly says, The hand of Yahweh has gone forth against me. It's far more bitter for me than for you. And then you notice that when they come back to Bethlehem and the women meet them at the city gate and so on, she says to them in verse 20, Don't call me Naomi, pleasant.

Call me Mara, for the Almighty has deeply marred me. There's a wordplay in the Hebrew there that is hard to pick up in English. That's my best attempt at it.

Call me Mara, for the Almighty has deeply marred me. I went away full, but Yahweh has brought me back empty. Why will you call me Naomi, since Yahweh has testified against me and the Almighty has brought disaster on me?

[13:56] So there is a sense of a certain bitterness, I suppose, or certainly anguish over what Yahweh has brought upon her and the affliction that he has brought.

And yet at the same time, there's a kind of a balance too. Did you notice what she says in verses 8 and 9 when she's trying to urge her two daughters-in-law to go back to Moab?

And notice what she says, May Yahweh deal kindly with you as you have done with the dead and with me. May Yahweh grant that you find a secure place each in the house of her husband.

She assumes that Yahweh does deal kindly, that he does have faithful love or steadfast love as it's sometimes translated, and she wishes and prays for this upon her daughters-in-law.

So yes, has Yahweh become bitter for her? Has he severely afflicted her, etc.? Has he deeply marred her?

[14:54] Yes. And yet at the same time, she knows that Yahweh is not an ogre who only makes people miserable. He's a God of steadfast love and mercy, and she holds that together with her reaction to her circumstances.

There's a certain balance with her, and yet there's a kind of blindness in it all as well. You've perhaps noticed that when you're in the midst of trouble, there's sometimes a blindness, and you

see it with Naomi there in verse 21.

I went away full, but Yahweh has brought me back empty, and so on. But then verse 22 says, Ruth the Moabitess was with her. If Naomi had just punched her elbow, she would have rammed into Ruth's ribs, and there was a gift that Yahweh had given her.

He had not brought her back empty. But there was a certain blindness in this affliction, and Naomi couldn't see that at the time. That would only come later. What I want you to see here is that though...

Well, one writer put it this way. Naomi complains of Yahweh, but she does not abandon Him.

[16:14] She's still struggling with the Lord. When she says the hand of Yahweh has gone forth against me, she's still dealing with God there.

Now, maybe we could put it this way. You may not think that's a great confession of faith, and I don't suppose it is. But if she does not have joy and peace in believing, as the Apostle Paul says in Romans 15, she nevertheless is still believing, because she's still dealing with what Yahweh is doing in her life, and trying to make sense of it, but she has not denied Him.

She doesn't like what He's done, but she hasn't walked away from Him. There's a perseverance you may miss. Sometimes there is wearied faith and battered faith, but there's still faith.

And we need to prize that. And I remember a time when my father was... I went up to see my father because my mother, I think, had broken her leg.

She was hospitalized, and Pop was there by himself, and so I went up to stay with him for a while and so on. And I remember one evening we had had a worship together, and Pop had read Scripture and prayed, and usually he didn't come out with anything real close to the chest, you might say.

[17:41] But there was a comment he made after we were sitting there in his study, after we had prayed and so on, and he said, it seems that the hand of the Lord has gone forth against us lately.

Now, of course, having had some theology, obviously by that time, I kind of thought, well, you know, I ought to be able to address... I thought it was maybe just a common sense position, and I was almost tempted to say, hey, Pop, when you get up into your late 70s, you can't expect to have perfect health, etc., you know, if you're thinking about mom's broken leg and so on.

Fortunately, I kept my mouth shut. I'm glad I did, because when I reflected on it later, my dad was dealing with his Lord, and he didn't need a bunch of secular goop from his youngest son to mess it all up.

It wasn't what he liked, but he was dealing with his God, and that's faith. It may be weary faith, but it's still persevering faith, and sometimes you can miss that when the affliction comes on you.

Now, secondly, there's a providence you can trace. Chapter 1, verse 6, through chapter 4, verse 17, a providence you can trace. Now, it's not that Naomi would see all these things at the time, but looking back, perhaps she would.

[19:12] Let's try to characterize this a little bit as we run through it. For one thing, there's a common providence here, a common providence. That's in chapter 1, verses 6 and 22.

Now, excuse me, this is not directly related to Naomi's particular circumstances, but it's related to her overall.

Did you notice the clear theological note in verse 6? It's one of two explicit theological notes in the text. The other is chapter 4, verse 13.

By chapter 1, verse 6, she heard in the country of Moab that Yahweh had looked after his people by giving them food. And was that true?

Well, yes, it was. You notice when it was in verse 22 that they arrived back in Bethlehem. It was at the beginning of barley harvest. The important thing is that there was a barley harvest that year.

[20:18] Yahweh had looked after his people in giving them food. You may not think that's such a big thing. It's kind of a common providence, perhaps, we think.

But that's pretty important. Even in her sad affliction, and even though her life seemed to have been falling apart, there would be food to eat in Israel.

We maybe don't pay enough attention to that. We used to live in southern Mississippi and in a town called Hattiesburg. And like most towns, they had garbage collection at certain times of the week.

Ours was on Monday and Thursday. They were just about to get mechanized when we left. You know where they come out and the robotic arm comes out and embraces the garbage can, lifts it up and dumps it and so on.

But they hadn't done that while we were still there. So they would still have the fellows ride on the back of the truck and pick it up.

[ 21 : 19 ] And because they tended to mangle your garbage cans if you put them out, they would leave them in the street or who knows where. I never put my garbage cans out.

We always had the, put the big black plastic bags in the garbage cans and filled them up and then you pull the yellow or red plastic strings and tie them up.

And I took the black plastic bags out to the street. Now, after I did that, we usually would have two bags maybe each time. Sometimes three if we had company and you made a little more garbage than usual.

But I would take out a couple black plastic bags. And I really got to thinking as I was doing that, this is really the sacrament of the black plastic bags.

Because if you think of it, as you walk down your driveway, dragging those things along, there's a certain logic comes into your mind or should. I have garbage.

[ 22 : 23 ] Therefore, God is good. Why do I have garbage? I have garbage because God has supplied food. It's a common providence.

And because it's common, we tend to forget it. That's what Naomi had. She at least would eat. Now, that's also an encouraging providence here.

And you see that in chapter 2 of Ruth. You notice the language in chapter 2, verses 1 to 3, when Ruth decides that she would like to go pick up the gleanings and leftovers in the grain fields behind the reapers and harvesters.

And she said, let me go try to do this. And Naomi gives her permission. And verse 3, she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech.

That last clause is sort of the writer's way of saying, think about this. This might lead to something. But she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz.

[ 23 : 29 ] But this was such an encouraging providence because you see where it leads in verses 17 to 20. Now, you remember the account there.

Boaz shows up and he says to his foreman, who's the young woman? And he says, oh, that notice he doesn't call her by name. He doesn't say Ruth. He says it's a Moabite girl that came back with Naomi.

So on. And she asked if she could glean and she's been at it pretty hard and so on. And Boaz then shows kindness to Ruth and tells her to stay in his field, to take a drink of water from the canteens or whatever.

When she needed it, he has her eat lunch with them and so on. Provides for her. She is overwhelmed with his kindness. And part of his kindness was that he tells his harvesters after lunch, now even take some out of the bundles of grain that you're wrapping up and so on and drop it behind and let her pick it up.

Well, the result of that was she came up with an ephah of barley, verse 17, which is about probably three-fifths of a bushel. Well, that's not bad for just running around gathering up the leftovers behind the harvesters.

[ 24 : 43 ] Someone was helping her out the way Boaz had arranged it. So, and then she comes home to Naomi and Naomi asks where she had gleaned.

She says, the fellow's name is Boaz. And she says, may he be blessed by Yahweh. And then I think the subject is still Yahweh, who has not forsaken his kindness with the living or the dead.

She looked at that ephah of barley. And she said, where on earth have you gotten that?

That's marvelous. You get a little goat's milk and you can probably make cereal and so on and thrive for quite a while on three-fifths of a bushel of barley and so on. So this was a real provision.

So, it was only a token, obviously. It was only a hint. But do you see the difference it made with Naomi? Do you see what she says in chapter 2, verse 20?

[ 25 : 50 ] May he be blessed by Yahweh, who, I think it's referring to Yahweh, who has not forsaken his kindness with the living or the dead. Do you see what a difference that is with the contrasting reaction she had in chapter 1, verses 20 and 21?

I went away full. Yahweh's brought me back empty. The Almighty has brought calamity or disaster on me. But this is much different.

What was it that made her change? What was it that made her see an encouraging providence? It was just a token. It was a mere ephah of barley, in a way. A little barley can go a long way in encouraging you.

Sometimes, don't you find that? Now, get out of the barley field. It's not always barley, is it? But in some token that the Lord gives you, it may just be a little hint of some kind that he gives you, that some little sign, and you say, you know, he hasn't forsaken me after all.

It's not that you're out of your trouble. It's not that the burden is lifted. It's not that the darkness has all turned to light. It's just you see some little indication, a token, that Yahweh has not walked away from you.

[ 27 : 21 ] Pardon the reference. This comes home to me in that I found that oftentimes tokens or hints can be more powerful than direct statements.

There was a time when, a year or two back, obviously, when I was in college, and I was dating a girl.

And we had dated a couple of years. And, you know, once in a while we mentioned the M word. And we didn't quite agree and see eye to eye on how to, on when to get married and so on.

You know, I don't need to bare my soul to you people. I can't trust your confidentiality. But in any case, we had a little conflict and we broke up. It was mainly, I suppose, my doing.

I didn't, I didn't want to lose her. But, you know, you're 20 years old and you can be kind of proud and, and, and so on. It was kind of, well, we just broke up.

[ 28 : 27 ] Now, something happened, though. It was, came a Christmas time of our junior year. And Barbara was in the German club.

And the German club was to have a, kind of the last, chapel. It's not a religious chapel, but a, a, a, a last, the last program before Christmas break there in the chapel.

And so everybody was to attend. And I went there and sat in the middle where my seat was and slouched down. And Barbara happened to be the MC for the German club. And, so I sort of watched the MC all the time.

Everything she said, then kept my eye on her and so on. Everything went on. They did all kinds of German stuff like Ohton and bomb and all, all this sort of thing and so on. And then, uh, it came to the end of the program and she was, she was giving the, the kind of the parting greeting and so on. And just as she was doing that and the process of that, uh, she happened to look at me and I was always looking at her. Um, we happened to make eye contact. Now this was only about three eighths of a second.

[ 29 : 37 ] You understand. It was very, very brief. And then it was gone. Uh, I, I, I didn't know how to interpret that obviously, but my roommate happened to see that.

And so he was talking to me later and he said, yeah, I saw that look. And, uh, I, I was not a prophet, so I didn't know how to interpret it, but he did.

He said, he said, as if she, she was saying that, that look, this relationship isn't over yet. Well, I didn't want it to be, uh, uh, really.

And, and, uh, you know, you get to thinking about it. Now it was only that glance, but after you get the authorized interpretation of it, you can, you can punch the replay button and you can relive that little scene.

And, whoa, you get enough fuel for, for two or three days on that. It's, it's amazing. And yet it's only a glance.

[ 30 : 42 ] It's really nothing. You know, but sometimes the hint, just a small thing can have more conviction than a blatant, obvious statement.

Do sometimes, sometimes the Lord give you those hints, just a token. Hasn't maybe relieved the pressure, hasn't taken away the pain, but there's just by the circumstances he takes you through. Perhaps he wedges a little cushion into the aggravation of your trial. Just enough for you to know. I haven't been forgotten.

It's an encouraging providence. Providence. And then two, there's a suspenseful providence. You see that in chapter three, don't you? And that goes through chapter four, verses one to 12, chapter three and through chapter four, verses one to 12, a suspenseful providence.

Now, I think if you ask Naomi, and she would say, she certainly, certainly believes in the sovereignty, the total control of Israel's God.

[ 31 : 50 ] She seemed to assume that when she assumes that it's Yahweh who has ultimately in charge of her affliction and so on. So I think, I think she believes that.

And yet she thinks that human ingenuity is compatible with that. You notice in chapter three, verses one to five, Naomi just doesn't sit back and say, well, let's see what happens.

Now, this is, there are all sorts of views on chapter three and, and four of Ruth. And I just don't have time to say, you know, there are four views and blah, blah, and so on.

So we just have to take a quick survey here. But apparently, Naomi may have wanted to try to push Boaz off dead center.

That's just a hunch. Boaz is very kind to Ruth, but who knows? Well, is he going to do anything? He apparently might, certainly knows that he's in the lineup of relatives who might be a redeemer or go ale, as the word is.

[ 32 : 56 ] But he hasn't apparently made any more moves. So Naomi says to Ruth, look, get yourself gussied up, take a shower, put on your best cloak, et cetera, and so on.

I want you to get down to the threshing floor, and you wait until Boaz is eaten and drunk and so on, and then you go lie down at his feet, and he'll tell you what you need to do.

Now, was this a risky thing? Yes, it was. But you have to understand, if women are going to do something, their options are limited. You just didn't, for instance, if Ruth had seen Boaz's coffee thermos there at the side of the barley field or something, she just couldn't take a post-it note and slap it on there that says, hey, Boaz, I'd like to talk to you.

My cell number is love, Ruth. You didn't do that. That just, that wasn't open to you. So, how are you going to, how are you going to try to make some connection here?

And so, this is apparently Naomi's scheme. And so, risky as it might be, Ruth does this, and so on.

And you notice the kind of tenseness that there is in the narrative.

[ 34 : 15 ] One point of tension especially comes at verse 8, when at midnight, Boaz was startled and turned over and behold, that's the usual translation of that Hebrew particle.

It usually means there's something of some degree of surprise. If you wanted to be colloquial, I suppose you could say, he turned over and, whoa, a woman lay at his feet.

That didn't used to happen. All the years that Boaz had been sleeping at the base of a heap of barley to protect his grain, he had never awakened and found a woman at his feet, that I know of.

This was probably a first for him, and probably scared the liver out of him. And then there's the conversation with him.

And Ruth says, spread your wing, the wing of your garment, over your servant, for you are a goleil, you're a redeemer. You know, in chapter 2, Boaz had said, may Yahweh deal kindly with you, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

[ 35 : 21 ] And now, Ruth, you might say so much as saying, I've not only come under Yahweh's wings, but I want to come under your wing, under the protection of marriage, and for you to protect and provide for me and for us.

Now, but the suspense of all of this, and you can see something about what a redeemer is, this word is goleil, a relative who, he's a near relative, who protected the person, verse 9, and her rights, which protection, in this case, would involve marriage, and ongoing provision, and rescue from destitution.

So, just within the confines of chapter 3 of Ruth, you could say that a redeemer, a goleil, is a near relative, who in our destitution, takes us under his protection, and provides for us.

That's not a bad beginning definition of what the Lord Jesus Christ, of course, does for us. But there's another sticky point, and here's the suspense coming in again, isn't it?

In chapter 3, verse 12, Boaz says, I'm more than willing. He seems to be delighted, but there's a redeemer nearer than I.

[ 36 : 51 ] There's another fellow who's a closer relation, who gets first crack at this. And then the question is, oh no, what now?

How will this turn out? Well, that's where chapter 4 comes in, when Boaz goes to court, at the city gate, and so on, and he confronts this fellow, has him sit down, has witnesses, and so on.

He says, now Naomi is selling this piece of land, and you're first in line, and I get my attempt, if you turn it down. And the fellow says, oh yes, I'll do that.

And then Boaz played his trump card, in chapter 4, verse 5. He says, now if you buy the field, you also get Ruth the Moabite, the widow, and you have to marry her, to raise up seed, to the name of

her dead husband, and so on.

Well, that was a different ball of wax, because instead of getting just land, to add to his holdings, this fellow would now have land, and if he had a son, for instance, by Ruth, then that land, on his death, would go to Ruth's son, rather than to his family, and in his estate.

[ 38 : 09 ] Moreover, he would have to provide, not only for Ruth, but probably Naomi, so he's got two more mouths. No, no, that doesn't look so good now. And so Boaz, gets the opportunity.

Now I say all that, that just, you know, in a survey form there, but there's a real suspense, going on here. Isn't that the way, the Bible does? Oftentimes, it keeps you, on the edge of your seat.

I mean, if you really get into it, at the moment, it's a suspense. I think that tells us, too, something about, God himself. Doesn't it tell us, therefore, that God, must be very interesting?

Surely, the way he works this out, surely the way, these points of tension, are resolved, but the way the story, fits together, with such suspense, points us, to the fascination, of God's ways.

It's not just, a literary device, it's kind of a pointer, to the character of God. That's the way he is. And so, there's a kind of a subtle intent, to lead us to doxology, as we read it.

[ 39 : 20 ] To stand up and sing, praise God, from whom gripping developments come. Even in baffling, and distressing providences, and some of them, that can be pretty anguished, but often, there's that element, of tension, and suspense.

But it tells us, at least this much, that God, is not boring. I haven't lived, a terribly exciting life, so far. But I have never, found, God, to be boring.

I don't think, there's a, Tejas, Adam, in his whole, massive, triune being, that's boring. God, is able, to keep, you, interested.

That's the message, of a suspenseful, providence. So there's a providence, you can trace, and hopefully, some of those, may be helpful, in your situation. Now, there's a third area.

[ 40 : 38 ] There's a preoccupation, you can infer. A preoccupation, you can infer. Now here, I refer to the whole, book of Ruth, and to a kind of, a literary pattern, throughout the book.

And it's easy for you, to pick up, and remember. Remember, notice that, every major episode, in the book of Ruth, comes back, to Naomi. It returns, to Naomi.

Chapter one, is obviously, that way, as you could see, in the reading of it, that finally, they come back, to the city gate, at Bethlehem. And of course, Naomi has figured, in chapter one already, but the end of that, episode, comes back, with its focus, on Naomi, and Ruth, there at the gate, the city gate.

Now chapter two, the day, in the barley field, when Ruth is reaping, and so on, closes, with Ruth, reporting back, to Naomi, and with the scene, at their home, wherever that was.

And it closes, with Naomi's, revised confession, doesn't it, in chapter 2, 20. You know, stressing, and acknowledging, Yahweh's, kindness, that she is seen, of that.

[ 41 : 57 ] But chapter two, comes back, to Naomi. And then you notice, in the threshing floor scene, in chapter three, it ends up, in verses, 3, 16 through 18, with a debriefing session, with Naomi.

Ruth comes back, after the night there, at the threshing floor, and before, it got light, so people could recognize, each other. Boaz, has her go back, and he puts six measures, of barley in her, her cloak, or something, and she takes it back, and she reports, to Naomi.

And then chapter four, the courtroom scene. After that's resolved, in verses, chapter four, verses 13 to 17, the focus comes back, to Naomi. Naomi. She's holding little Obed there, on her lap.

But it always comes back, to Naomi. So, here it is. Every chapter, returns to Naomi, and some provision, for her. It's as if, it's as if to say, Naomi is never forgotten.

She is always, and ever, the focus, of Yahweh's attention. I know, this is a literary, pattern. You know, it's just the way, each story, in the book of Ruth, goes.

[ 43 : 16 ] But after a while, when it happens, four times, each one comes back, to focus on Naomi, and some provision, for her. It's more, than just literary. It's theological.

It seems to be saying, something about, God himself. It's as if, Yahweh, is preoccupied, and fixated, on her welfare. And he cannot, forsake her.

He cannot, if we could speak this way, get his mind, and his attention, off of Naomi. I don't know, if you've ever noticed, how preoccupied, people can be sometimes.

I remember, once, preaching, in Mississippi, when I was living there. Now this is a deep, southern state, so they have all kinds, of pests, you know.

And, pulpits are interesting. Well, you can't hide anything, on this one. This doesn't work. But, some of those, churches, this was a country church, had a wooden pulpit, and then you have, a shelf or two, inside, right, that, you people out there, wouldn't be able to see.

[ 44 : 26 ] But, sitting in the pulpit, before the service, I noticed that there were, two cans, two spray cans, of wasp and hornet spray. Now that tells you something, doesn't it?

And, I wish I would have had them, at an earlier time. In our first pastor, in the, in the state of Kansas, right in the middle, of our country, I had, two, two congregations, I was serving, and one of them, was out in the country.

It was a bunch of, Czech, Czechoslovakian people, descendants, who made kulaches, and all sorts of good things. And, it was a small congregation, but I went out there, about 9.30 every Sunday morning, and, and, held a service there.

You know what, some of those country churches, are probably like, come about, May, or so, the weather starts heating up, and you begin to, you know, kind of activate, some of the pests, like wasps.

Well, this particular day, I was trying to preach my heart out, on Jeremiah 31, and the new covenant, and people were doing their best. You know, you could eyeball them, look them right in the eye, but there were these wasps, kind of doing kamikaze, antics, going down, and so on, and you're looking at someone, and telling them about the new covenant, and so on, and they're, they really try, but you know, they keep following, and they can't get their mind, and their attention, off of those ones, they're just preoccupied with it.

[ 45 : 56 ] Fortunately, that dude, landed right on the pulpit, where I was preaching, I slammed my hand down on them, flicked them off, and we were back, I had their attention again, but, but they just can't let it go.

Well, in a way, I think that's what the book of Ruth, is saying, about Yahweh. He just, can't let it go. He can't, he can't, forget, his servant, in this case, Naomi.

And, I tend to think, that that's the same, with all his people. that the living God, has a certain preoccupation, about, your care, and he simply can't, get you, off, his mind.

And, we usually, are not aware, of this, are we? Consciously, perhaps. Because, we can, scarcely, grasp, the intensity, of Yahweh's, preoccupation, with his people.

Now, fourthly, let's notice, that you have a perspective, you must trust here. Chapter 4, verses 18 to 22. A perspective, you must trust.

[ 47 : 22 ] This is the genealogy, that goes from, Perez, to David, obviously. And, it's really the climax, and the most important part, of the book. It shows you, where it all comes out.

It comes out, at King David. Naomi's grandson, Obed, is a part of it. And, and the family history, going clear back, to Genesis 38, comes through Obed, to Jesse, to David.

And, since you've read, ahead, you know, that the rest of the story, comes out, in 2 Samuel 7, David is the king, through whom Yahweh, has promised, to establish his kingdom, in this world.

And, through that line of kings, Jesus the Messiah, will come. You can check, Matthew 1, 18, Matthew 1, verse 5, to see where this, is, comes in, Matthew's, ancestry, role there, in Matthew chapter 1.

chapter 4, verses 18 to 22, is saying, is saying, that this is not simply, a nice family story, in the book of Ruth, but this is an episode, in the prime line, of the kingdom of God.

[ 48 : 46 ] So, we're doing more here. God was doing more here, in the book of Ruth, than giving Naomi, a garment of praise, instead of a faint spirit.

He was doing that. But, he was doing far more. It's not just the individual view, but it was the kingdom view, as well. He was working, at both.

And, here's something, that Naomi, and company, and perhaps, sometimes we ourselves, cannot see. Here's a perspective, that most of us, never have, on our afflictions.

How could Naomi, see 150 years, down the timeline, to see, where her affliction, and the conversion, of Ruth, and all of this, would work out, in the coming of David, the covenant king.

How could she have, seen that? But, as we look at this story, and then see, where it came out, we can say, that famine, and triple grief, and destitution, and the conversion, of a Moabite girl, and barley fields, and dirt, under the fingernails, and threshing floors, and courtrooms, and the whale, of little Obed, coming out of the nursery.

[ 50 : 04 ] All of that, was the way, God was establishing, his kingdom, in this world. It's hard, to see that though.

You can't see it, perhaps at the time. I was intrigued, reading, once, about Enterprise, Alabama. It's a town, in the very, southeastern part, of our state, of Alabama, which is a deep, state in the deep south, and, and, the area, around Enterprise, Alabama, was a cotton producing, area.

But, they had some problems. In about 1914, they had produced, 38,000 bales, of cotton. But, by 1917, they were down, to 7,000 bales.

What was the problem? All this thing, called the boll weevil, came. And, it drove them nuts. The fathers, farmers tried everything, to kill boll weevils.

They, they picked them off, the plants. They tried drowning them. They, tried spraying them, with carbolic acid. They used ashes. They even used whiskey. Nothing worked.

[ 51 : 21 ] And so on. And, so, finally, in desperation, some of them, switched to peanut farming. And others, switched to hay. and, corn, and livestock.

And after a little while, the, the economy of the area, stabilized. And, and prospered. Because they weren't just focused, on the one crop of cotton.

So, they erected, a monument, in Enterprise, Alabama. And I understand, you can see it, to this day. It's a statuesque, woman, in white, flowing, robes, holding aloft, a 17 and a half pound, bull weevil, the size of a football, in tribute to the bull weevil, who drove them out, of the cotton business, and caused them to prosper.

But you couldn't have seen that, in 1917, that that would be the result. And, the reason this is important, of course, is, to underscore something, that we need, probably to, realize again, and again.

It shows that, none of us, knows enough, to say that, God doesn't know, what he's doing. None of us, has enough wisdom, to dispute, God's strange ways.

[ 52 : 50 ] And, faith can never guess, what God may do, through our affliction. So, one can really say, given that it comes to David, the covenant king, that Naomi really is, the great, great grandmother, of the kingdom of God.

Let us pray. Amen. Now, Father, we thank you, that the words, of the hymn, seem really, to be true.

Behind, a frowning providence, you hide, a smiling face. Who is a God, like you, oh Lord?

You are a God, who truly, can multitask. you both, establish, your everlasting kingdom, and you care, for your individual people.

And, because of that, we praise you, and we thank you, that you, are our God. Amen. Amen.